

*The Holiness of Christian
Churches:*

Set forth in a

SERMON

Preach'd *September 4*, MDCCXIX.

AT THE

CONSECRATION

OF THE

NEW CHURCH

AT

SUNDERLAND.

By *THOMAS MANGER*, LL. D.

Chaplain to the Right Reverend Father in GOD,
JOHN Lord Bishop of *London*.

Publish'd at the Request of the Audience.

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The Holiness of Christian
Churches:

See faith in a

STERN MON

THE HOLY SPIRIT

CONFESSION

OF THE
NEW CHURCH

SUNDAY

BY JOHN W. MAZZE, LL.D.
Catholic to the Right Reverend Bishop of New York

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DEDICATION

To the RIGHT HONOURABLE
AND
RIGHT REVEREND Father in GOD,
NATHANAEL Lord CREW,
Lord Bishop of *Durham*.

My LORD,



HE following Discourse being preach'd by your Lordship's particular Appointment, and upon an Occasion, where the Lord Bishop of London acted in your stead and by your Commission,

DEDICATION.

sion, I could not think of any Protection that I could more rightfully intreat, or more usefully employ, to cover the Defects of the Performance, than that of your Lordship. But besides these Considerations, the Subject of it naturally led me to beg the Countenance of one whose Episcopal Cares, for near half a Century, have been faithfully and successfully employ'd in supporting that decent and orderly Worship, which is here defended. The regular and conformable State of your Lordship's Diocese, which is indeed the most remarkably so of any in the Kingdom, shews your steady and zealous Encouragement of the external Discipline of our Church, and withal justifies the Discernment of that wise Prince, who by speedy but just Steps advanc'd you to that high Station, which you have so long fill'd and adorn'd. It hath been your Lordship's singular Felicity to join the Coronet to the Mitre, and by the hereditary Title of a noble Family to do Honour to a Place,

DEDICATION.

Place, where all others receiv'd it ;
and yet it hath been as much the Hap-
piness of the Church, that your Tempo-
ral Dignity never obstructed your Spi-
ritual Character, and that the Prelate
was never lost in the Peer. But still
your Lordship's unparallell'd Munifi-
cence to a College, in the Government
of which you receiv'd early Omens of
your future Greatness, hath added one
Title more to those of your Birth and
Dignity, which is that of being the
greatest living Patron of Learning ; a
Title, my Lord, that will in distant A-
ges set off and perpetuate the rest, and
will not be forgot, while Sciences flou-
rish, and Gratitude can find a Tongue.

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Divine Providence hath in part re-
warded your eminent Zeal, Bounty and
Charity, with an uncommon Length of
Health, Vigour and Prosperity, and
you will have the Prayers of all well-
wishers to Religion or Learning for their
long Continuance.

DEDICATION.

*Among these I beseech your Lordship
to reckon my self, and to believe me to
be with entire Respect and profound
Submission,*

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

most Obedient

and Obliged

Humble Servant,

Fulham, Oct.

22. 1719.

Thomas Mangey.



PSAL.



PSAL. xciii. 5.

*Holiness becometh thy House
for ever.*



THE Words of the Text offer a Subject suitable to this pious Occasion; and in discoursing of them, upon account of the present Solemnity, I shall endeavour to use all convenient Brevity. You who are the Inhabitants of this Place, are already beforehand with me in this Subject: Your uncommon Generosity in building and endowing this Church, and the pious Zeal you have express'd for its Consecration, do abundantly testify your Persuasion, that it is a Matter both of Duty and Expediency, to *worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*; that the Worship which we owe to the Sovereign of all Things is most acceptably to him, and most beneficially to our selves, perform'd in the Places dedicated

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to his more immediate Use and Service. You seem therefore, without my Pains, fully convinc'd of the Holiness of Churches, and of those unspeakable Blessings of which you are put into Possession by this solemn Act of Dedication; and my Business as a Preacher, is rather to confirm and encourage those good Affections, than to raise and excite them.

The decent and devout Joy which is generally express'd upon these Occasions, is very agreeable to the Sentiments and Practice of Believers in all Ages; it is the Result of a serious and well-disposed Mind, and bespeaks a right Judgment of, and due Thankfulness for, the Blessings of Christianity. And on the other side, when these Opportunities of advancing God's Glory and the Salvation of Men are treated not only with Coldness and Neglect, but with impious Scorn and blasphemous Reproaches, how much doth this Behaviour betray a Disregard to the Christian Institution, and answer the prophetick Character of *the Scoffers in the last time*? With how ready Condescension did King *David* leave his Throne to meet the Ark of God, and with how solemn Thankfulness did he receive it? And yet the Dedication of a Christian Church under the Gospel Dispensation, doth afford as great Matter of Joy to us, as the receiving of the Ark could to the *Jews*. If they with so much Eagerness embraced the Types and Shadows of future good Things, should not we

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we with equal Affection receive those good Things themselves? If they so much valued the Attendance upon a Service that *could not make the comers thereunto perfect*, should not we do as much or more for the frequent Opportunity of those Sacraments that offer surer Means of Grace, and a nearer Hope of Glory? It was the pious King's Lot, as it may probably be ours, to be scorn'd and ridiculed for his devout Joy by ^a one, who having little Sense of inward Religion, had the less Regard for the outward Appearances of it: But we should believe, as we have great Reason to do, that the Comforts of a serious and religious Mind are preferable to the Applauses, and should therefore over-bear the Reproaches of Men.

Our blessed Lord was pleased to honour and sanctify the Feast of the Dedication with his own Presence, and the ^b primitive Christians, whose Example next after his should be our Rule, were wont to celebrate the Dedication of their Churches with lasting Anniversaries: They had so just a Sense of the spiritual Benefits which they receiv'd from frequently and decently approaching the Altar, that they dated from the first Opportunity of doing so, the Commencement of their Happiness; and did therefore as thankfully commemorate it, as the most carnal amongst us would any civil

^a 2 Sam. vi. 16.

^b Euf. Hist. Eccl. l. 10. c. 3.

or temporal Deliverance. Their Zeal in this Point was not, as some have affirm'd, and others have too readily believ'd, the Effect of gross Superstition, which was not then known in the Church; but arose from a firm Persuasion, that the Appointment of Times and Places for religious Worship promoted true Devotion, and that these being kept holy, tended to make those who observ'd them, *holy in all their Conversation.*

I shall endeavour in the following Discourse,

I. To shew wherein the Holiness of Places set apart for God's Service consists.

II. Set forth what is the natural Result and Consequence of such Holiness.

I. I would shew wherein the Holiness of Places consists. The Holiness that is ascrib'd to Places, is truly and significantly called *relative*, meaning thereby that it is not natural and intrinsic, but flows from that relation such Places bear to God. The Holiness of some Places above others, was at first occasion'd by some uncommon Manifestations of the divine Presence in them. The History of old time furnisheth us with some Examples of the Almighty's appearing to and conversing with good Men, and for a time, as it were, circumscribing that Immenstity *that fills Heaven and Earth.* Whatsoever Place God had sanctified by his more immediate Presence, they

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they from that time used it with greater Reverence; and by building an Altar, endeavour'd to separate and distinguish it from common Ground. It is not easy, nor indeed very necessary, to determine whether the Ancients were directed by early Tradition, or the Suggestions of natural Reason, to this Reverence of holy Places; but the Practice is justified by God's express Declaration, who when he appear'd to *Moses* in the Bush, commanded him to put off his Shoes, *for the Place, saith he, whereon thou standest, is holy Ground.*

The *Jews* could not want an Argument for the Holiness of their Temple, from the visible Appearance of divine Majesty that rested over the Sanctuary. God had led them through the Wilderness *by a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of Fire by Night*; and as that visible Appearance of Glory follow'd the Tabernacle, so upon *Solomon's* Dédication of the Temple, it was at length fix'd there, over the Holy of Holies. The Temple was upon this account call'd *the House of God, the Tabernacle of the most high, the Tent that he had pitch'd among Men.* This Argument of the divine Presence, which the *Jews* call'd the *Shechinah*, continued during the first Temple, but was deny'd to the second built by *Nebemiah*, either to convince God's People of their want of the *Messiah*, or to lead them by degrees to that more perfect Discipline of the Gospel, which was to be guided by *Faith, not by Sight.*

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Sight. However, notwithstanding this Defect, the second Temple, upon account of God's immediate Presence once there, was accounted as holy, and used as reverently, as the former: They still continued to think, as is evident from the Practice of our Lord and his Apostles, that their Prayers were offer'd to God more acceptably there, than in other Places.

The Christian Churches seem not to have succeeded to the Synagogues, which were rather Places of Instruction than of the *Jewish* Worship, but to the Temple wherein all the Benefits of the Covenant, and the legal Expiations of Sin, were transacted; conformably to which the two Sacraments have, by a pious and ancient Custom, been administred only in Churches, and have been accounted irregular, when administred in any other Place. The Christians do not pretend to assert the Holiness of their Churches upon account of any such visible Appearance, as the *Jews* had during the first Temple; but they have as good Reason to believe it from the Assurance that the Son of God was pleased to give his Disciples; when *two or three, saith he, are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them.* The Christians are not so narrow as the *Jews*, who believ'd their Worship ineffectual if not offer'd in one Place only; nor so wild as some late Sectaries, who believe all Places alike: They are persuaded that,

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that, tho' we may *every where lift up holy Hands to God*, yet the Prayers that are offered in holy Places tend more to God's Glory and our own Benefit; they are there perform'd with greater Seriousness and Attention, and therefore heard with a more favourable Acceptance.

The Necessity of setting apart Places for divine Worship, and the Holiness of them when thus set apart, seem to have been already so well establish'd by former Revelation, as not to need many express Precepts upon that Subject in the Gospel. Tho' the particular Appointment of the Temple, and the Confinement of Worship to that Place only were temporary Parts of the *Jewish* Covenant, yet the Holiness of Places solemnly dedicated to God carry'd a moral Reason with it, and therefore was not abolish'd with the ceremonial part of the law. Our Saviour came not to *destroy the Law, but to fulfil it*; and therefore the moral Precepts of it that promoted a due Regard to the divine Majesty, remained in as full Force as ever. For this Reason the Hierarchy of the *Jewish* Church by Apostolick Practice and Institution became, as *St. Jerom* observes, a Model to the Christian; their Feasts and some of their Ceremonies were likewise retain'd upon account of the Analogy between the two Covenants. The Reason of

^c Epist. ad Evagrium.

their Institution did not cease with the Temple Service, but continued to have the same Obligations upon Believers. Now this is the Case of the Subject in hand; Holiness of Places was not so much a Precept of the ceremonial as of the moral Law, and therefore was of a lasting Obligation. The Religion of Nature taught Men the Necessity and Expediency of approaching the divine Worship with Reverence and Solemnity, and that this would be best done in Places devoutly set apart to that and no other Business. The Command then of *reverencing God's Sanctuary* was not so given to the *Jews* as to exclude the Christians; and the Reason of the Precept doth as properly extend to the careful and devout Use of Churches now, as it did then to that of the Temple.

But farther, what Reasons could there be assign'd for the Holiness and Reverence of Places dedicated to God's Service, that are not as strong and cogent under the Gospel, as under the Law? If it be for the Solemnity and Importance of the Service, or to raise suitable Affections in those that come to it, there is nothing of this kind that is not as much, or more necessary in the Christian Church. Shall not we reckon the Commemoration of a dying Redeemer to be preferable to the Oblations of Bulls and Goats? Should not we seek for all due Means of approaching with Seriousness and Devotion these surer Means of
Salva-

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Salvation, and with the greatest Warmth of Affection, embrace the external Signs and Pledges of a *Covenant founded upon better Promises*. The Service of the Temple, with all its Sacrifices and Expiations, was but a low Resemblance of that more excellent and more comfortable Sacrifice in the Lord's Supper; and they therefore who vilify the Holiness of Churches, seem to have unjust and unthankful Notions of the Christian Covenant, and of those Affections with which they should transact it.

The Practice of the Apostles and first Believers, seems to be an abundant Proof of that Holiness of Churches for which we are contending. Immediately after the Ascension, and for some time after, they frequented the *Jewish* Temple at the stated Hours of Prayer, as being then the most holy Place: But as they could not celebrate there the most solemn Mystery of our Religion the Lord's Supper, which was then call'd breaking of Bread, they did it in Houses set apart for that Purpose. Their Circumstances would not, without Notice and Danger from the *Jews*, suffer them to erect new Edifices; but their Practice seems to have been to separate and set apart some larger Room of a Believer's House to that only Use. It is very probable that the House of *Mary*, the Mother of *John*, was so dedicated and employ'd: And this Conjecture is farther confirm'd by Mr. *Mede*, who observes, that

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the Greek Words *κατ' οἶκον*, *Acts ii. 46.* which our Interpreters have translated *from House to House*, should be render'd *in the House*, meaning hereby the House or Place of their constant meeting to break Bread. But this is still more evident from the Reproof which *S. Paul* gave the *Corinthians*, for prophaning the Church by some Excesses at their Feasts of Charity; ^d *have ye not Houses to eat and to drink in; or despise ye the Church of God?* where the Opposition of Houses to Church shews, that by Church is meant the Place of meeting.

However in the second Century, when the Number of Believers was much increased, and the Circumstances of some rich Converts enabled them to do it, they began to erect Edifices for divine Worship. Their Courage in this Point was as remarkable as their Bounty and Charity, since they were at that time under the Frowns and Oppression of civil Power, and might by sumptuous Buildings, for such some of them then were, provoke the Jealousy or filthy Lucre of an unbelieving Governour. This Fact is not only attested by the Christian Writers, but by the ^e Heathen, who may be allow'd competent Witnesses in the Case; and the Churches in all Probability were very numerous in the latter end of the

^d 1 Cor. xi. 22.

^e Vide Lamprid. in vitâ. Alexandri, item Flav. Vopisc. item Lucian. in Philopatr.

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third Century, if we may believe the Edicts sent out by some persecuting Emperors to level and destroy them. Thus when the Piety of Christians was in its utmost Perfection, Churches were diligently erected, and devoutly and respectfully used; and if there be a want of such Respect now, or a Contempt, and Opposition against it, it only shews how ready some are to step out of the *good old Paths*, and to lead others after them. Never, till the late Days of Confusion, were the Houses of God prophaned and rifled, under the Pretence of Religion and Reformation; nor probably before the Times wherein we now live, was this solemn Episcopal Act of Consecration reproach'd and revil'd by any who pretend to the Name of Christian. To conclude then, the Precepts of the old Law, the Reason of the Thing, and the Practice of the first Believers, do plead strongly for the Holiness and devout Usage of Churches: And I shall therefore go on in the second Place, to shew what should be the Result and Consequence of such Holiness.

Now one Consequence of this Holiness, is the Separation from all common and civil Uses.

Holiness, to whatsoever Person or Thing it is apply'd, implies some sort of Separation. This Attribute is in God the great Distance of his Nature and Will from Inconstancy and Imperfection: It is in Creatures a Freedom

*L. Bp Burnet Hist
of the Reform.*

from all *Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*; and the relative Holiness of Places and Times, is the Separation of them from all Uses not sacred and religious. The Places therefore that are accounted holy, are for that Reason to be employ'd only in the Service of Religion: Whatsoever is dedicated to God, is by that solemn Act of Dedication made so entirely *his*, that the Application of it to civil Uses, tho' jointly with sacred, is one Degree of Sacrilege. It is resuming at least a part of what is already another's, and bestowing God's Share upon the unrighteous *Mammon*.

Our blessed Lord, who was throughout his whole Life *meek and lowly of Heart*, yet shew'd a remarkable and exemplary Zeal, in turning the Money Changers, and those that sold Doves, out of the outer Court of the Temple; he thought, and by that taught us to do the like, that secular Business, tho' in the Consequence of it for the Service of religious Worship, was yet a Prophanation of that sacred Place: *Make not, saith he, my Father's House a House of Merchandise*. If the Son of God manifested so much Zeal for a Place whose Service was speedily to be abolish'd, how much should *we* his Disciples express for those Places, where a more lasting and heavenly Worship is establish'd, where his Death and Sufferings are so usefully commemorated, and the Means and Pledges of Salvation administer'd in the Christian Sacrifice?

But

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But the Separation of sacred Places from common Uses, is not only just in respect of God to whom they belong, but expedient in respect of our selves. The religious Duties will be perform'd with greater Attention, Seriousness and Devotion, when not disturb'd by secular Business. These holy Places so carefully separated, and so reverently used, will prove so many seasonable Admonishers of our Duty, and effectually remind us of that great and important Business that should be managed there. The Remembrance of any great Affair is generally affix'd to the Place where it hath been transacted, and recurs to our Thoughts as oft as we come thither: And therefore if the House of God were indifferently made use of for worldly and religious Matters, we should be there in great Danger of attending the divine Worship with all the Absence and Dissipation of Mind: The Man upon these Occasions would have the better of the Christian, and the Zeal for our temporal Interests would overbear all Attention to spiritual. Every worldly Affection would find some Matter of Encouragement from a Place so secularly employ'd, and would disturb our most solemn Addresses with sinful and unseasonable Avocations. We should thus be led by the Deceitfulness of our Hearts, which are ready to embrace every worldly Occasion, to mock the Searcher of Hearts with insincere and wandring Devotions, and *our Prayers*, by a
dreadful

dreadful tho' a deserv'd Severity, would *be turn'd into Sin.*

It is a matter of as great Importance, as the obtaining every thing we want can be, *to pray with the Spirit and the Understanding*; but we are wont to mistake, or at least are not willing to employ the Means of doing so. Tho' God, whose Majesty *fills Heaven and Earth*, hears every where, yet we are not fit every where to pray to him, but the Government of our Thoughts, when we do so, is very much assisted by the Separation of the Place to no other but religious Business. If our Affections were not in the Chancel of the World, if they could be recall'd to a devout and spiritual Disposition at one Thought, that is, if we were not Mortals and Sinners, we might with equal Convenience and Benefit *lift up in all Places holy Hands to God*; but the carnal State of human Minds will not admit of such a Latitude. All of us, notwithstanding the Assistance of holy Times and Places, are more or less deficient in a due Attention upon our Devotion; and they generally are the most guilty of this Omission, who are the least sensible of it. The Separation therefore of Churches to religious Uses only, is justified by the spiritual Effects of it, and tends, as every humble Christian must experimentally know, to the more devout and attentive Performance of our Prayers.

Secondly,

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Secondly, Another Consequence of the Holiness of Places, is the Decency of their Structure and Ornaments.

The decent Structure of Churches is a proper Expression of Respect to that divine Majesty to whom they are dedicated. Whatsoever is mean, indecent, and apt to raise Contempt in the Beholders, is unworthy of bearing any Relation to the Lord of Heaven and Earth. The Expences upon the Ornaments of divine Worship are but a small Return to him, who hath given us all we have, and who needs not this Tribute of our Bounty, but with kind Condescension accepts it for our own sake, not his own. When Men exceed in the Profuseness of their own Dwellings, and have no Regard to the necessary Decency of God's House; when they have nothing to spare from their fashionable and expensive Pleasures for their Maker's Glory; when they can without Shame and Remorse *dwell in Cedars, while the Ark of God is only in Tents*; when the Church is the dirtiest and most indecent Place they ever come to, how little Sense have such of God's past Favours, what Expectation can they have of any in Futurity?

The Prophet justly reproach'd the *Jews* for grudging the Expence of their Worship, and offering only the Blind and Lame in Sacrifice^f: *If ye offer the Blind for Sacrifice, is it not*

^f Mal. i. 8.

Evil?

*Evil? And if ye offer the Lame and Sick, is it not Evil? Offer it now unto thy Governor, will he be pleas'd with thee, or accept thy Person, saith the Lord of Hosts? But how much is this sinful Parsimony of the Jews follow'd, and exceeded by some who bear the Name of Christians? How many amongst us who would not yet be thought Unbelievers, would reckon their Wealth spent in the worst manner, when laid out upon Religion, and are so much more *Lovers of Pleasure than Lovers of God*, as to subscribe more chearfully to the erecting of a Theatre or a Play-House, than to the repairing or the rebuilding of a Church?*

The solemn Decency of Places set apart for Divine Worship, makes them better answer their End, and abundantly justifies the pious and well-meant Liberality that is exerted in this way. Such Places, when built with Proportion, and adorn'd with some Degree of Splendor, do of course strike a greater Awe and Reverence upon the Beholder. We are apt, by human Prejudices, to judge of the Person by the things about him; and therefore we should approach God's Presence with less Chearfulness and less Care, when we must do it in Buildings unworthy of him, and of the important Business to which they are dedicated. The Senses and the Imagination must go along with the Spirit and Understanding in true Devotion; nor are we so thoroughly spiritual

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ritual in our religious Affection as not to find some Benefit from sensible Objects and Representations.

For this Reason the House that was built by God's own Appointment and Direction, had every thing about it so splendid and magnificent as to strike the Senses, and thereby to impress upon their Minds a more devout Reverence towards that Majesty which had plac'd his Name there. There is no Question to be made but the devout Jews could with greater Attention, Seriousness and Fervency, offer up their Prayers at the Temple, than in any other Place; and of this we have a sufficient Proof in holy David, who valu'd so much the Opportunity of worshipping there, as to account the Exclusion from it the severest Circumstance of his Exile, and therefore breaks out into these Expressions of Devotion, *One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Temple.* And he observes in another Place, that *one Day in God's Courts is better than a thousand.*

It is certain that the Christians in the first Ages were as diligent and bountiful in adorning their Churches, as the Circumstances of that Time, and the Oppression of the Civil

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Power would permit. They were Strangers to the unaccountable Behaviour of those who were profuse in their own worldly Pleasures, and criminally and unbelievably frugal in promoting God's Glory. We have some Attestation of this in the second Century, from the Scoffer *Lucian*^h, who makes the gilding and Magnificence of a Christian Church the Subject of his impious Mirth. And the Church of *Tyre*, tho' erected early in the fourth Century, yet according to *Eusebius*'s Description, ⁱequall'd the Magnificence of any that were erected afterwards. The Decency of Churches was not the Effect of growing Superstition, but was so much antecedent to it as to be observ'd at the time when Piety and Christian Discipline still flourish'd; and when the Generality of Believers worshipp'd *God in Spirit and Truth*, they likewise to the best of their Power endeavour'd to do so in *the Beauty of Holiness*.

Thirdly, Another Consequence of the Holiness of Places, is, a respectful Behaviour when we are in them.

This is most certainly necessary in the immediate Presence of the Sovereign of the World, upon whose Acceptance of our Addresses our present and future Happiness whol-

^h Καὶ δὴ διηλορδὴ σιδηρέας τε πυλᾶς καὶ χαλκῆς ὁδοὶ ἀναβάσται, ὃ πλείστας ἀεικνυκλωσάμενοι ἐς χερσὶν ὁδοὶ οἶκοι ἀνέλθοντες, οἷον Ομηροῦ τὸ Μενελάου φησὶ. *Lucian. Philopatr.*

ⁱ *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. 10. cap. 4.*

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ly depends. External Behaviour is the result of inward Reverence, and is therefore part of our Duty to God, whom we are to worship *in Body as well as Spirit*. As we would not be wanting in outward Respect to an earthly Prince or Superior, much less should we be so before him, *whom the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain*; and as we would not defeat the Success of our Petition by an aukward Dress or indecent Deportment, we should express a proportionable Care in offering up those Prayers which are to transact the great Affair of Salvation.

It is observable that the greatest Kings and Emperors paid that Respect to Churches, in the fourth Century, as to divest themselves both of their Guards and regal Ornaments whenever they came thither. They quitted all Marks of Sovereignty when they approach'd the Presence of the King of Kings, and thought themselves oblig'd to as humble and respectful Homage as the meanest Subject. This Custom is employ'd by the Fathers of that time, as an Argument to persuade all Inferiors by the Examples of their Kings, to a decent Respect and Humility whensoever they enter'd the Church; and the Use I should now make of that Custom, is to reproach the thoughtless Negligence and indecent Behaviour of many during Divine Worship, who in Appearance express less Reverence to the Lord

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of all things, than they commonly do to any Superior, upon a trifling Occasion.

An inward Sincerity will of course influence the outward Deportment; but where one is wanting, there is great reason to suspect the Absence of the other. It is possible, that the external Character of Religion may be wore without the Concurrence of the Affections, but it never so happens (nor is it possible that it should) that the real Power of Godliness should thrive and grow without the external Form of it. The Mind will shine through the Veil of Flesh that covers it, and will express its religious Dispositions by the turn of the Countenance, and the decent Deportment and humble Gestures of the Body. Hypocrisy did not of itself invent these Forms of Devotion, but transcrib'd them from the common Appearances of true Religion, and afterwards abus'd them to worldly and wicked Purposes; but in the mean time as the Behaviour of the Hypocrite is an Imitation of that of the truly Devout, it is a sufficient Attestation that the external Forms of Religion are in the Sense of Mankind the Indications of serious and devout Dispositions. True Religion was the first Parent of these receiv'd Expressions of outward Reverence in the Worship of God, and Hypocrisy did but adopt them; but the Reasonableness of the Practice suffers no more by this Cheat, than Truth and Reality by Fiction and Imitation.

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Men were so much prompted by Nature to express their inward Reverence to God by bodily Signs and Gestures, that there was less Occasion to require and specify them in the New Testament. It is observable that the Christians from the beginning used that Posture in Prayer, which was the most expressive of Respect, according to the Custom of the Countrey where they liv'd. If we take the Vision of the twenty four Elders in the *Revelations* to be a Representation of the Methods of Worship then in use, the Churches of *Asia* where *St. John* liv'd, must be supposed to have used Prostration in their Prayers and Thanksgivings to God. The eastern Nations, being more vehement in their Sentiments and the Ways of expressing them than others, used this sort of Prostration to their Princes, and from thence made it a religious Rite, which is retain'd in the *Greek Church* to this Day; but the Western Nations being accusom'd to do Homage only by kneeling, have generally establish'd this Posture for religious Worship.

Most certainly it is very fitting and reasonable that we should use that Posture in Adoration, which is most expressive of Respect, by the Practice and Custom of the Place where we live; and if we can without Offence kneel in addressing an earthly Sovereign, how readily should we shew the same outward Reverence to him who is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*? To conclude, the Gospel, as spiritual

tual as it is, yet relates to Body as well as Soul; Religion is the Work of the whole Man, and is not only testified by the outward Gestures and Ceremonies of Worship, but is likewise very much improv'd by the decent and discreet Use of them.

These are the several Consequences of the relative Holiness of Places, namely, a Separation of them from civil and common Uses, the Decency of their Structure and Ornaments, and a respectful and serious Behaviour whenever we are in them. But two Things are still farther observable from this Subject.

First, That this Care in dedicating and beautifying Churches, tho' it tends, as it certainly doth, to the Glory of God, yet this is not the only Reason of its Usefulness.

It is a Matter of Expediency as well as Duty, and is requir'd and expected from us for our own sake. We our selves are sufficiently repaid by those serious and devout Sentiments, which the external Decency of a holy Place will naturally inspire us withal, and are therefore to lay the Expences of this sort, not to the Almighty's Score, but to our own. We our selves are the Gainers even at present by such Liberality, and may justly put the Question in *Job*, ^k *Can a Man be profitable to God, as he that is wise is profitable to himself?*

^k Chap. xxii. 2.

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But it is farther observable, from what hath been said, that external Religion, with the Rites and Ceremonies of it, doth in the Consequence at least tend to promote real Piety. This is not a Matter of that sinful and dangerous Superstition, as our Enemies would suggest; nor of that Indifference, as some deluded Friends too readily believe. There are some instructive and significant Representations that strike the Senses, and raise the Affections to spiritual Things. We are not Angels but Men, Men cloath'd with Bodies, and in some degree govern'd by the Imagination, and have therefore need of all these external Helps, *till we come to the perfect Man, to the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ*: And they who think that such Assistance is unnecessary, either presume too much upon their own Strength, or judge very falsely of the Extent of Christian Perfection. In short, tho' inward and habitual Holiness be the ultimate End of the divine Dispensations, yet external Religion is an useful Means of promoting it; each of them hath its just Bounds: And therefore as we would not be so carnal as to fall short of the one, so neither should we, in this imperfect State, pretend to be so spiritual and abstracted, as to neglect the other.

The Application I would make of all that hath been said upon this Subject, is to recall your Thoughts to this solemn Act of Consecration,

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cration, and to those great Blessings which I presume you understand and value, and of which you are now put into Possession. Your Joy upon this Occasion, is such as becomes Christians sincerely and devoutly thankful for the Means of Salvation thus brought to their Doors. The Benefits of Christianity, which are greater than human Reason could suggest, or human Merit and Abilities claim, and could only be purchased by the Mediation of the Son of God, are now more effectually secured to you by the frequent Opportunities of decent Worship, and the regular Administration of the Sacraments. You have now, my Brethren, the Comfort (and may you ever be so just and wise in your Sentiments as to think it so) of offering henceforward your Addresses to God in his House, and after his Will; of having your Children initiated into a saving Covenant by publick Baptism, and of being your selves confirm'd and strengthen'd in that Covenant by the Lord's Supper.

The primitive Christians when they celebrated, as they did by solemn and never-forgotten Anniversaries, the Dedication of their Churches, made the successful Propagation, and the undisturb'd Exercise of their holy Religion, one great part of their joyful Meditations. They commemorated upon those Occasions, the Triumphs of Christian Knowledge over Pagan Ignorance and Superstition, of Truth over Errors and Heresies, and of Peace
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over the Oppression and Persecution of civil Power. They then recollected the comfortable Promise that our blessed Lord made to his faithful Followers, *of being with them to the End of the World*; and that *the Gates of Hell* should not, as they have never yet done, *prevail against his Church*. Nor should we therefore be wanting, upon this pious and solemn Occasion, to remember the happy Establishment and frequent Deliverances of our own excellent Church, for whose Welfare, amidst many threatening Storms, we should be as thankful, and as solicitous for the Continuance of it, as the primitive Christians were for theirs. It is now our Comfort, as it will hereafter be our Happiness, that in striving earnestly with Zeal and Perseverance for the Doctrines of this our Church, we contend not for human Decisions, and unedifying and speculative Conjectures, but for a *Form of sound Words*, for the *Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*.

The Excellency of our Ecclesiastical Constitution, both in respect of Doctrine and Discipline, deserves a large Share in our Joy and Thankfulness, which will still appear the more conspicuous, when compar'd with the Defects and Blemishes of many parts of Christendom. In some Places an Ignorance of the Gospel, like *Ægyptian* Darkness, seems to prevail; in others the Christian Faith, tho' known and profess'd in its main Points, is yet defaced by

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Popish and gross Superstition; in others, where Truth is establish'd, free both from Ignorance and Superstition, yet even *there* little or none of the primitive Discipline is retain'd, no Mission or uninterrupted Succession of Clergy, and consequently no very regular Administration of the Sacraments. We need only to observe the Defects or Excesses of other Churches, in order to be convinc'd of the Excellency of our own; and it is the Ignorance of both one and the other, that makes some amongst us so little Friends to that Communion into which they were baptiz'd, and in which they profess Hope of Salvation. This solemn Act of Consecration now perform'd by Episcopal Hands, should remind us of one great Instance of Happiness, which we above most of the reform'd Churches enjoy, which is an Ecclesiastical Hierarchy of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, such as was establish'd in the Apostolical Age, and by a regular Succession hath continu'd to this Time.

But if our Church agree in its Hierarchy with some, and its Doctrine with others, yet there is one thing peculiar to it, for which we are bound to praise and thank the divine Goodness, and that is our excellent Liturgy. This is singly our own, without Rival or Example, and may without Presumption be accounted the best human Composure extant. It is with great Propriety call'd the *Common Prayer*, since it is so much suited to the common
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Capacities and Conditions of every one; it is neither below the Saint nor above the Sinner, but enables us to ask with Decency for every thing that Nature can want, or Christianity can claim. The Ceremonies that are prescrib'd by our Rubrick are few but significant, such as are in the due mean between Indecency and Superstition, and are well fitted both to express and raise the devout Affections of a serious Petitioner.

What remains then but earnestly to entreat you, that the Prosperity of this Church, so primitive in its Faith, so regular in its Discipline, and so judicious and decent in its Worship, should be the Subject of your Cares and daily Intercession with Heaven, that you would *pray for the Peace of our Jerusalem*, and be assur'd that *they will prosper who love it*; that you would not only strengthen it by your Zeal and good Wishes, but endeavour to adorn it by your Examples, and thereby remove the only Objection that our Enemies can justly make, which is the Inconsistency of our Practice with our Profession. In order to this let me persuade You in particular, who are the Inhabitants of this Town, to be as diligent in resorting to this Place now dedicated to God's Service, as you have been in building and endowing it, and whenever you do so, to bring along with you such Preparation as is suitable to the Approaches before that Almighty Sovereign, to whom

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Episcopal Dedication it now more belongs; by thus devoutly and freeing this earthly Sanctuary, you may be assur'd of a joyful Admission into heavenly Sanctuary, *whither Christ the runner is gone before us.*

Which blessed Place may we all find through the Merits of our eternal Redeemer *Jesus Christ*; to whom Father, and Holy Spirit, be all Glory and for ever.

F I N I S.

